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| Circular number | 23/2008 | Date issued | 29 May 2008 |
| This circular is | For information | No response required | |
| This circular is | Relevant to the National Framework | | |
| Status | This circular informs Fire and Rescue Authorities and senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service of progress with the Fire and Resilience Programme. | | |

Fire and Resilience Programme Highlights – May 2008

Issued by:

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Programmes, Finance and Performance Division

Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue
Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and
Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer**

Please forward to:

Summary

This continues the series of monthly 'highlights' notes to inform Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) of progress with the Programme. Suggestions are welcome about how to make the notes most useful to FRAs and the FRS; comments should be sent to the contact below.

For further information, contact:

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1.0 National Framework 2008-11

- 1.1 The Department published the new Fire and Rescue National Framework on 20 May (FRS Circular 22/2008). It sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the FRS over the next three years.
- 1.2 In his Foreword to the Framework, the Minister for the Fire and Rescue Service said: "One of the main objectives of the revised Framework is to balance the overall weight of expectation placed on the Service in order to provide the capacity to deliver FiReControl and other priorities." As part of this, the number of "must" and "should" requirements has been reduced from 37 in the previous Framework to 25 in the new Framework.
- 1.3 One of the four chapters of the new Framework is devoted to resilience and in particular to the Fire and Resilience Programme, the purpose of which is to provide an effective, resilient capability to respond seamlessly in all situations, whether they are day-to-day incidents, large incidents needing a regional response, or major national disasters caused by terrorism, accidents or nature.

2.0 FiReControl

- 2.1 The FiReControl project will provide a resilient, nationally linked network of nine regional control centres (RCCs), supporting the mobilising of FRS resources throughout England. It is about giving the FRS the mobilising and response tools they need to enable a continuing world-class service.
- 2.2 The report, 'Facing the Challenge', produced by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, following the widespread flooding in 2007, supported the FiReControl project, particularly in relation to the benefits of interoperability when there is a high volume of calls and 'spate' conditions. The report, together with discussions with the FRSs most affected, also stressed the importance of maintaining the existing command arrangements in addition to the mobilising role of the RCCs. This work has now been embedded in the FiReControl project.

3.0 Firelink

- 3.1 Firelink will provide a resilient, digital, wide-area radio communications system on one network for England, Scotland and Wales. Almost all existing control rooms have now had their Firelink terminal equipment fitted and all FRA vehicles are due to be fitted with Airwave radios by mid 2009. Thereafter, Firelink interfaces will be fitted to all RCCs ready for activation of FiReControl.

4.0 New Dimension

- 4.1 New Dimension has supplied equipment to deal with major disasters, including urban search and rescue, mass decontamination, high-volume pumping, and enhanced command support capability, supported by nationwide training and support and a national coordination centre. The resources are intended to be mainstream Fire and Rescue Authority assets, and Fire and Rescue Authorities are encouraged to use New Dimension resources in all appropriate circumstances where they will bring benefit to the response: their use should not be restricted to major emergencies.

- 4.2 The requirements which the National Framework places on FRAs in respect of the Fire and Resilience Programme are set out in the Annex to this Circular.
- 4.3 The Department consulted extensively on the drafting of the Framework, which was broadly welcomed by FRAs in their response to the formal consultation at the end of last year. The Government's full response to comments received is available on <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/nationalframeworkresponse>. A copy of the National Framework itself can be downloaded from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/nationalframework200811>. The Government will shortly lay before Parliament the order needed to bring the new Framework into effect.

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NATIONAL FRAMEWORK REQUIREMENTS IN RESPECT OF THE FIRE AND RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

FiReControl

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- make preparations to move their control service to the Regional Control Centre network, complete the tasks in the FiReControl transition plan in line with the dates set out and to carry out any tasks specific to their FRS necessary for the move of their control service;
- participate actively and constructively in existing regional arrangements for the transfer of the control service to the RCC;
- ensure that the local authority controlled company in their region is established by the FRAs, working through their RMB, as soon as possible, and in good time to carry out formal requirements as a good employer and to take on the lease of the building as quickly after practical completion as possible;
- enter into agreements, at least six months before cut-over:
 - i. with the RCC company in their region for the delivery of the control service on their behalf by the RCC;
 - ii. with Communities and Local Government and other fire and rescue authorities to provide national co-ordination of the RCCs where necessary and to provide a flexible approach to the use of all FRS resources;
 - iii. to ensure that resources can be mobilised across fire and rescue authority borders.
- co-operate fully with the FiReControl technology supplier, and any relevant sub-contractors;
- report progress regularly to Communities and Local Government using the tools provided for that purpose.

Firelink

Fire and Rescue Authorities must support the rollout of Firelink by:

- co-operating with the suppliers by giving access to vehicles and existing control rooms, and by ensuring that training programmes are completed to timetable, providing all reasonable support.
- assisting the Firelink programme with testing of the new system and migration of radio communications to the RCC.

New Dimension

Fire and Rescue Authorities must use the contract established by Communities and Local Government to secure the long term maintenance of the New Dimension resources for which they are responsible.